Lesson 7:

Leading Performance Conversations

Lesson Objectives

After completing this lesson you will be able to:

- Describe the purposes of each of the performance conversations required/recommended under NSPS and tell when each is to occur.
- Discuss how to prepare for and lead each performance conversation.
- Describe a simple process to follow within each conversation.
- Discuss your responsibility for identifying and addressing performance deficiencies.
- List guidelines for writing an employee self-assessment.

Communication Drives Performance

Communication drives performance by doing all of the following:

- Creating shared understanding.
- Building mutual trust and confidence.
- Promoting a common sense of purpose and direction.
- Encouraging teamwork and cooperation.
- Cultivating personal accountability and excellence.

Performance Conversations

Conversation 1

Performance Plan

- *Establish performance expectations*
- *Align employee objectives with organizational goals*

Conversation 2

Interim Review

- *Check progress*
- *Provide feedback*
- *Make course corrections*

RECOMMENDED

End-of-Cycle Review

- *Review employee self-assessment*
- *Gather data for written appraisal*

Conversation 3

Annual Appraisal

- *Review written appraisal*
- *Communicate rating of record and performance payout*

Performance Conversations Timeline

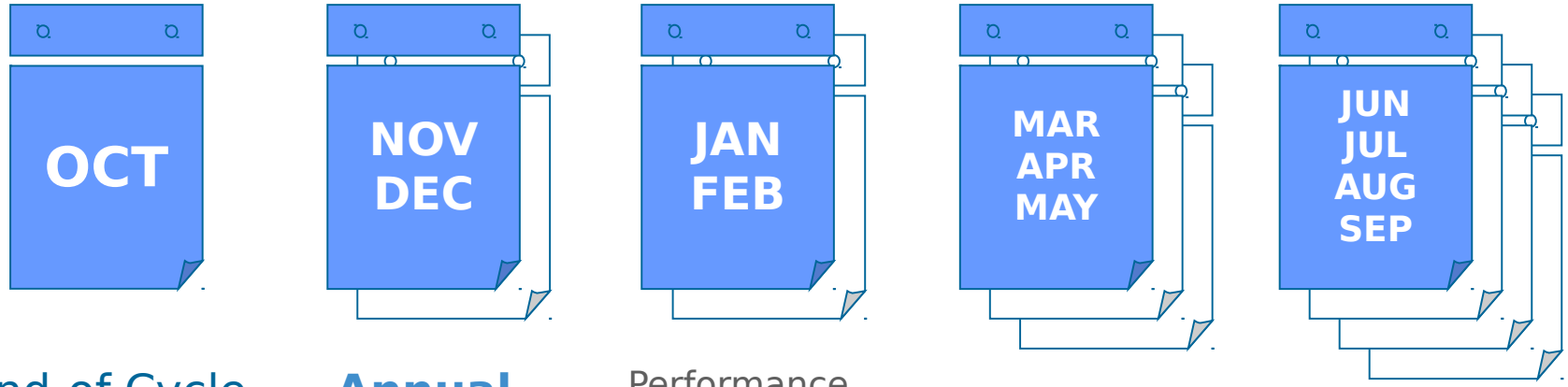
Performance Plan

Ongoing feedback

Ongoing feedback

Interim Review

Ongoing feedback



End-of-Cycle Review

Annual Appraisal

Performance payout in January

Performance Conversations Process

Each conversation requires **preparation**

Example Task

- Drafting job objectives
- Reviewing organizational goals
- Writing a self-assessment

Each conversation has a distinct **purpose**.

Example Topics

- Accomplishments
- Contributing Factors
- Development goals
- Areas for improvement

Each conversation has important **outcomes**.

Example Products

- Performance plan
- Written appraisal
- Recommended rating
- Recommended payout

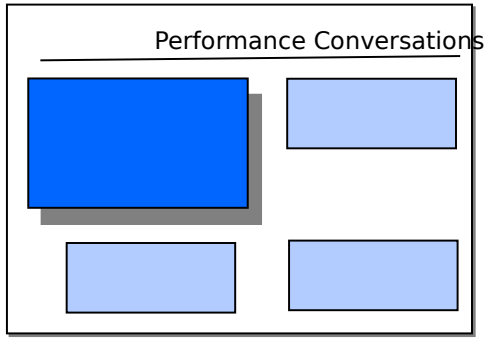
Performance Plan Conversation: Purposes & Outcomes

PURPOSES

- To reach a joint understanding of performance expectations for the current (new) rating cycle
- To align employee objectives with organizational goals
- To identify developmental needs

OUTCOMES

- Performance plan
- Development plan
- Conversation notes, other relative documentation



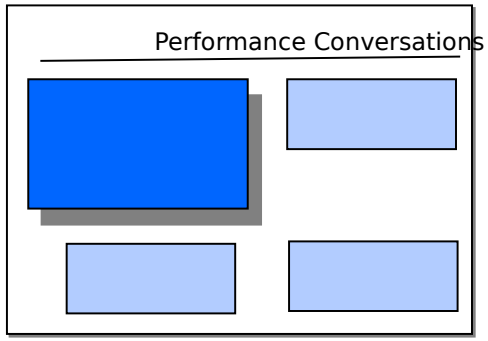
Performance Plan Conversation: Preparation

EMPLOYEE

- Draft job objectives for current (new) rating cycle.
- Review Contributing Factors and relevant Performance Indicators.
- Consider stretch goals and developmental needs.

MANAGER/SUPERVISOR

- Communicate organizational goals to employee in advance.
- Review employee's previous performance plan and current salary.
- Review Contributing Factors and relevant Performance Indicators.



Performance Plan Conversation: Topics & Tips

REQUIRED TOPICS

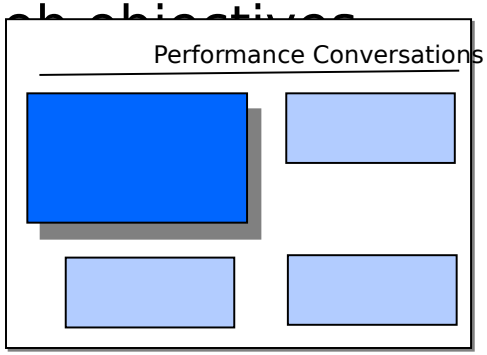
- Organizational goals
- Work priorities
- Job objectives
- Contributing Factors
- Developmental needs
- Impact of conduct on performance

Optional Topics

- *Potential barriers to success*
- *Tasks, timelines, and milestones*

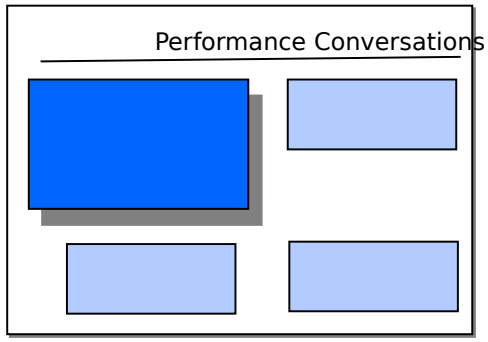
TIPS

- Be open to employee input and ideas.
- Be open to employee concerns about potential barriers and unknowns.
- Consider talking about your own job objectives and how these fit with the employee's job objectives.

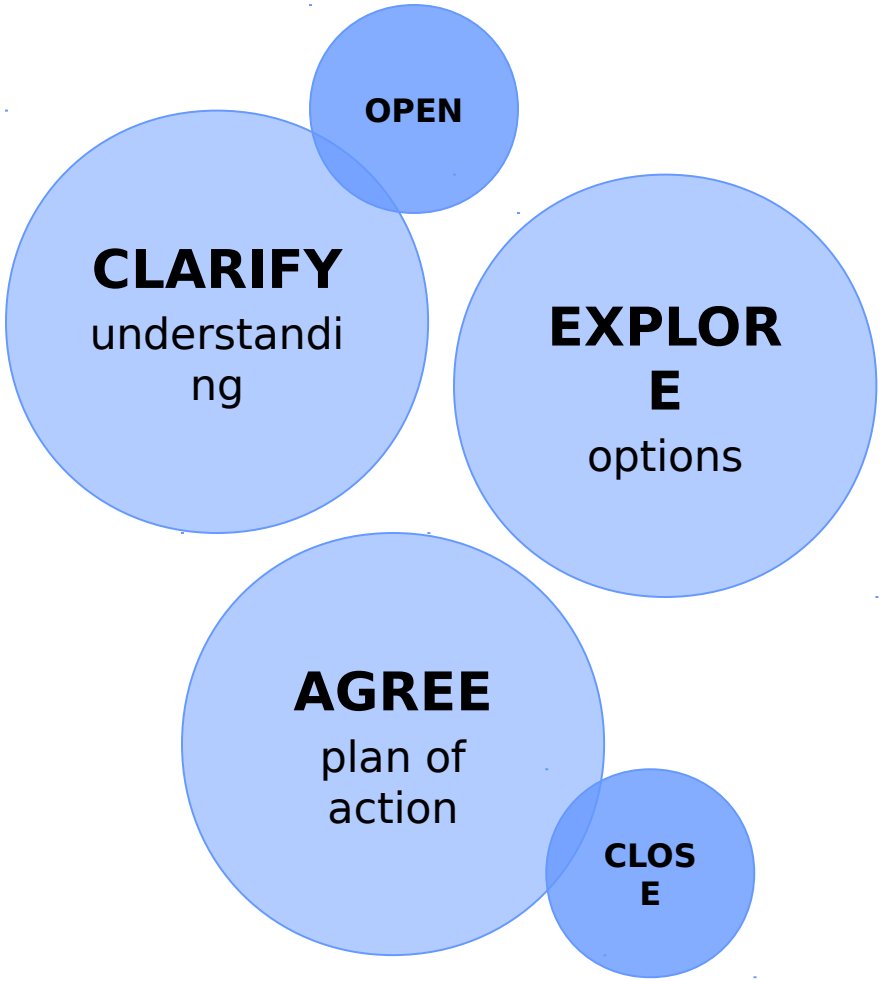


Performance Plan Conversation

ROLE PLAY



Guidelines for Productive Conversations



Clarify

Gather information to reach a shared understanding of issues and concerns.

Explore

Seek ideas and options for achieving positive results.

Agree

Agree on a plan that promotes successful completion of objectives.

Interim Review Conversation: Purposes & Outcomes

PURPOSES

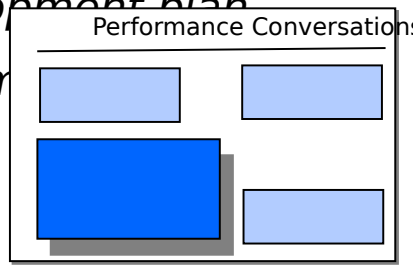
- To check progress toward achieving objectives
- To acknowledge what is working
- To make course corrections as needed
- To provide feedback so the employee has the direction needed to achieve objectives

OUTCOMES

- Confirmed performance plan
- Confirmed development plan
- Conversation notes, other relative documentation

Optional Outcomes

- *Revised performance plan*
- *Revised development plan*
- *Performance Improvement Plan (PIP)*



Interim Review Conversation: Preparation

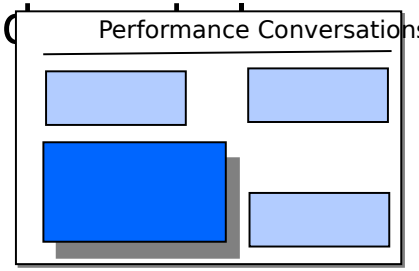
EMPLOYEE

- Review your performance plan and development plan.
- Write a self-assessment (recommended) or be ready to present examples of progress made toward achieving objectives.

Schedule the meeting for a mutually agreeable time.

MANAGER/SUPERVISOR

- Review your own notes regarding previous feedback given and employee self-assessment (if submitted).
- Review organizational goals and work priorities.
- Review employee performance plan and development plan.
- Create an agend[illegible] your feedback.



Interim Review Conversation: Topics & Tips

TOPICS

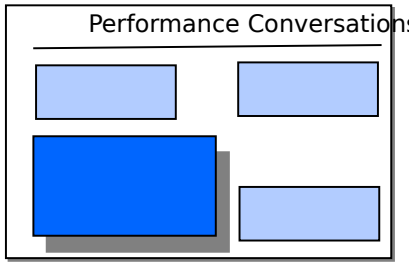
- Progress made toward achieving objectives.
- New or changing organizational goals and work priorities.
- Adjustments to performance plan and/or development plan.

Optional Topics

- *Areas for improvement*
- *Problems solved, problems needing solutions*

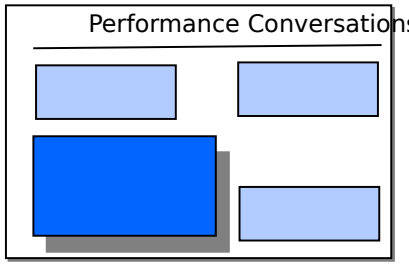
TIPS

- Distinguish this conversation from the “everyday” feedback you give employees.
- Note problems, but avoid problem-solving.
- Provide feedback that is specific and supportive.
- Provide examples of the employee’s performance.
- Do not say, “If I were to rate your performance today …”



Interim Review Conversation

ROLE PLAY



Addressing Performance Deficiencies

Types of Actions:

- Remedial training
- Mentoring
- Coaching
- Reassignment
- Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) (not required)
- Letter of counseling
- Verbal or written warning
- Written reprimand
- Adverse action
  - Removal
  - Suspension (any length)
  - Reduction in rate of basic pay or pay band

Component Discretion

- Timing, recording, and minimum number of interim reviews.
- Preferred methods for addressing poor performance.
- Identification of competencies for developmental positions.
- Guidelines for individual development planning.
- Guidance regarding reduction in rate of basic pay or pay band.

End-of-Cycle Review Conversation: Purposes & Outcomes

PURPOSES

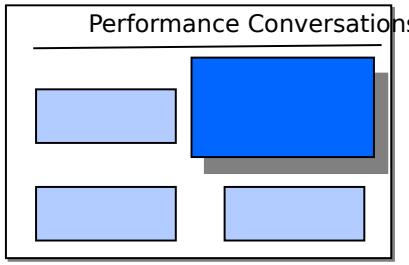
- To review employee self-assessment.
- To clarify understanding of accomplishments and contributions and to gather additional information regarding employee performance.
- To provide feedback for continuing success and development.

OUTCOMES

- Written appraisal

Outcomes <u>required</u> regardless of whether recommended conversation occurs:

- *Recommended rating*
- *Recommended share and payout distribution*
- *Conversation notes, other relative documentation*



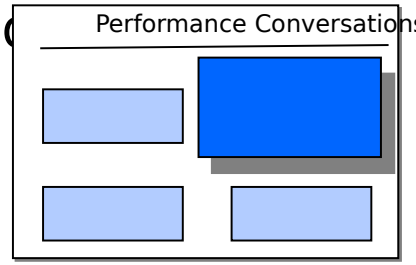
End-of-Cycle Review Conversation: Preparation

EMPLOYEE

- Write a self-assessment.
- Review the Performance Indicator.
- Review your Contributing Factors.

MANAGER/SUPERVISOR

- Review employee self-assessment.
- Review your notes from the Interim Review and other feedback conversations.
- Review the Performance Indicator and the descriptors for selected Contributing Factors.
- Create an agenda for your questions.



Topics & Tips

TOPICS

- Employee self-assessment
- Employee job objectives, accomplishments, and link to organizational goals
- Selected Contributing Factors and Benchmark Descriptors

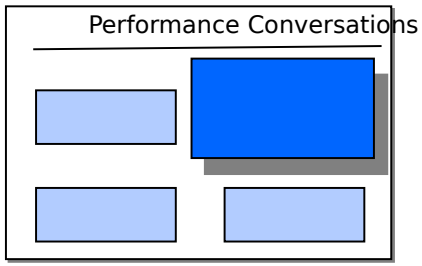
Optional Topics

- *Improvements shown, areas needing further improvement*

The End-of-Cycle Review and Performance Plan conversations should be scheduled separately.

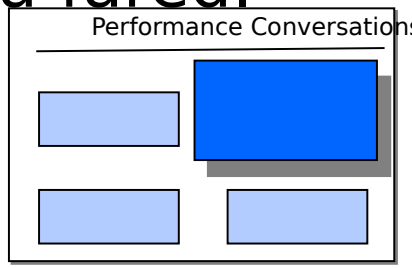
TIPS

- Use your best listening skills. Ask questions to clarify understanding, otherwise let the employee do most of the talking.
- Give feedback throughout the year to reduce employee anxiety at this meeting.
- Do not say, “If I were to rate your performance today …”



Guidelines for Self-Assessments

- Restate your understanding of your objectives.
- Highlight your most significant achievements for the rating cycle.
- Make the connection between what you did and why that should matter to your organization.
- Cite instances where your actions or conduct exemplified your Contributing Factors.
- Note challenges you faced and how you fared.



Annual Appraisal Conversation: Purposes & Outcomes

PURPOSES

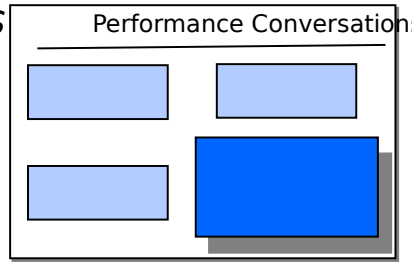
- To review written appraisal.
- To communicate rating of record and performance payout (share and payout distribution).
- To provide feedback for continuing success and development.

OUTCOMES

- Performance payout (January)
- Rating of record
- Conversation notes, other relative documentation

Optional Outcomes

- *Revised performance plan (for current cycle)*
- *Revised development plan*
- *Performance Improvement Plan (PIP)*
- *Appeals process*

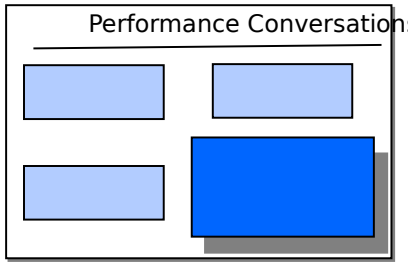


EMPLOYEE

- None

MANAGER/SUPERVISOR

- Review comments from Pay Pool Panel (if any) and incorporate them into the final written appraisal.
- Review your notes from the End-of-Cycle Review and other feedback conversations.
- Plan your feedback, particularly if the rating is below Valued Performance or otherwise not what the employee is expecting.



Topics & Tips

TOPICS

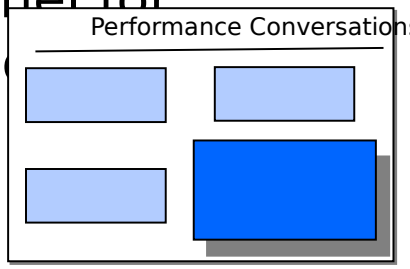
- Written appraisal
- Rating of record
- Performance payout (share and payout distribution)

Optional Topics

- *Areas for improvement*
- *Appeals process*

TIPS

- There should be no surprises. All concerned want the appraisal to be fair.
- If the rating of record is below Valued Performance, it is important to discuss next steps immediately.
- Do not criticize or blame the pay pool panel for lowering a ratin



Annual Appraisal Conversation

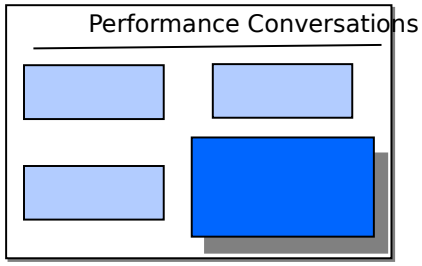
VIDEO 1: Annual Appraisal #1
VIDEO 2: Annual Appraisal #2

Supervisor: LTC Martinez
Employee: Al Simpson

In the first scene, what does the supervisor do wrong?

In the second scene, what does he do right?

What does the employee



Lesson Review

- Each performance conversation has distinct purposes and important outcomes.
- Employees should prepare for each conversation, as should supervisors.
- A simple process to follow in each conversation is Open→Clarify → Develop → Agree → Close.
- Employee self-assessments provide valuable information for managers/supervisors during the review process.

Lesson Review

- While each conversation presents opportunities for giving feedback, feedback should not be limited to these conversations.
- Your employees are likely to feel less anxious about performance conversations if you have done your job and given feedback throughout the year.
- NSPS expects managers/supervisors to take responsibility for identifying and addressing performance deficiencies.

Questions